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Panda-mania

by Will Nicholls

If you were tuned into the news networks March 25 you were subjected to wall-to-wall panda-mania. China, as you must know by now, rented Canada two pandas for five years (for \$5 million, no less) and our mainstream media decided this was the top news story of the day. Canadians got to see an empty runway and endless filler while reporters waited for the late plane carrying the two bears to Toronto. It was exhaustively covered by Canada's laziest reporters.

Meanwhile, there was something else going on that day. But you'd be hard-pressed to find much coverage of it. The Cree Nishiyuu walkers, who had trekked over 1600 kilometres from Whapmagoostui, arrived in the nation's capital to scant, and grudging, attention for their efforts. The image of Canada's youth walking 1000 miles through harsh conditions and temperatures as low as minus 40 apparently lacked importance and human interest for the newsroom decision-makers who filter our information. The walkers were briefly mentioned in between spasms of breathless excitement over two pandas rented to a Canadian zoo.

The walkers would have liked to meet Prime Minister Stephen Harper, but he had convenient panda fever. The PM's priority was to host a "special ceremony" to welcome the furry foreigners to their new Toronto animal prison for the next five years. Aboriginals will be around longer than five years after all.

Bernard Valcourt, the recently appointed Aboriginal Affairs Minister, did meet them, but not publicly. In the House of Commons, he generously acknowledged the determination and commitment of those who made the journey. Later in the day, far away from the news cameras, Valcourt indicated he would accept an invitation to visit Whapmagoostui Cree Nation and learn more about the motivations for the epic journey.

Even given the proven abilities of Conservative spin doctors, I was flabber-

gasted. Valcourt could have shown up to welcome them and point out how strong, determined and willing these Canadian were to take on such a challenge. He could even have distanced himself (and his party) from the Idle No More movement by simply recognizing their strength of character in completing this walk through such challenging conditions. It would have gone a long way to repairing some ties with First Nations.

In any case, the true problem is even larger than the fact that the government's lies and fluff diversion tactics are being swallowed without question by the mainstream media. All you have to do is look how folks here and in other countries avidly followed the epic journey of the Nishiyuu walkers. Japanese schoolchildren tracked their progress on a daily basis. Australians joined in, as did people across Quebec.

The potential for journalists to develop dramatic stories of human endurance and commitment was enormous. But the mainstream media instead showed how irrelevant they have become. Imagine if it had been a group of white youth who had made this incredible journey. The press would have had a field day with hours of coverage and pride in our nation. Instead, two rented pandas took the spotlight on our TV screens and news pages. Meanwhile, social media was buzzing with stories and commentary on the Nishiyuu walkers and their cause. The contrast is telling.

CBC's comedy show, This Hour has 22 Minutes, ironically noted that the walkers might have gotten more coverage if they were as cute as the pandas. But this is too important for satire.

I am proud of the youth who made this journey. I know how hard it was and the strength of purpose that allowed you to overcome these hardships in order to complete your journey. It was an expression of belief in yourself, your people, and your nation – and in doing what is right. You have shown yourselves to be dab iyiyuu.

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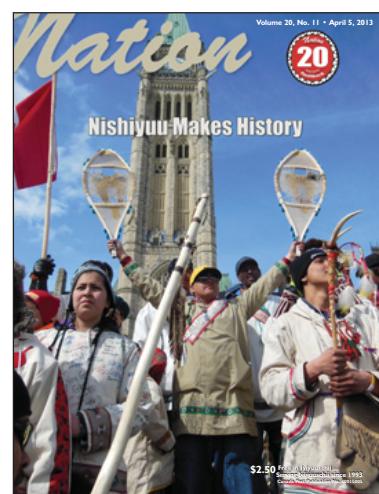


photo by:
Ernest Webb



A journey of a nation

by Sonny Orr

I watched the progress of seven intrepid young men on their epic walk from Whapmagoostui to Ottawa, much of it by snowshoe. At first I was sceptical, thinking that perhaps they might come to their senses and give up, but they didn't. Their walk to express the need to come to terms with our people's perils and obstacles, mishaps and downfalls was overcome after the first 1000 kilometres. Along the way, the seven morphed into 80, and then swelled into several hundred on the final leg to the journey.

I wasn't the only one watching, as the rest of Canada gradually tuned into to see what this extraordinary trip was all about. I wondered what the other Canadians thought, so I checked online for any story that would have popped out from the mainstream media and on the Internet. What I saw was something a little paradoxical. On the one hand, there were accolades for these youth, and on the other hand, there were naysayers and outright racists.

It depended on where you looked. Comments on the CBC website were encouraging and the site showed the rest of the country the way our lives used to be. Our traditions and endurance, our customs and values were showcased for those who wanted to understand the true motivation behind this historic walk.

Then there were the comments on Yahoo.ca, which to my surprise, were nearly all racist and full of hatred for Aboriginals. How could so many people feel this way towards these fine young people? I didn't hear those kinds of comments when others did basically the same thing, like Terry Fox and those inspired by him. No, these were outright

racist comments. I read about how much these people – most likely all Canadians – couldn't bear the thought of Aboriginals spreading messages of hope.

I felt terrible, since many of these young walkers are family members and friends. Then, the ultimate snub came from Harper himself, who couldn't lose face with the Chinese and chose to meet with their pandas instead. I know that the Chinese are interested in our natural resources and that there is a price to pay for our lands and territories, but, hey they have enough money to buy Canada out. I wonder how long Aboriginals will be overlooked for the sake of a few bears.

When someone snubs my family like this, I take notice. It may seem that I take this personally, but it's not the pandas' fault that they have to be kept alive in a zoo forever. If people didn't care, they would be extinct like many other species in this world. Maybe we will be next, the true Canadian who cares about their own people and their own lands and the multitude of cultures that are accepted here in this fine country of ours.

But where do we draw the line, how cute and cuddly do we have to be to earn the respect of our country's leader? Perhaps Harper had to make a decision – to deal with inspired youth who chose to show the rest of the world where we come from and for what we represent or to deal with the matters of selling out Canada for some yuan. Yes, China is a rich country with many more millionaires than we could ever imagine, but hey, they still need our resources to survive. But at the end of the day, I would choose the youth over any bear.

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Coming together

Annual Val-d'Or march underlines the fight against racism

Story by Akiva Levitas
Photos by Paul Brindamour



The two spokespersons for the 13th Gabriel-Commanda Walk, Lisa Gagné (with handdrum) and Marlène Jérôme

Over a 1000 people gathered in downtown Val-d'Or for the 13th annual Gabriel Commanda March on March 21. The event is held every year on the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and brings people from all walks of life together to fight the prejudices and racism that is still creating divisions in our society.

Despite the snow, the atmosphere at the march was festive and positive. Many came out in a show of support against racism in Val-d'Or, including students from local schools, colleges and universities, who swelled the ranks of the marchers to 1,200, according to organizers. Before starting, marchers were treated to colourful performances by the Screaming Eagles, Les Frères d'Armes, Lil Rhymes and Malik Kistabish.

"We see it more and more every year that the young people who join in are more aware and sensitized to not accepting racism in their society," said



A Black, a Native, and few White kids who are showing their colors by taking part in the Walk

organizer Édith Cloutier, the director of Val-d'Or's Native Friendship Centre. "It's by doing this march every year and having those young people join in with group discussions beforehand and they discuss it in class with their teachers."

Gabriel Commanda's legacy of building bridges with the first non-Native settlers in the region is an inspiration to build a better rapport between the Native and non-Native communities. Despite his efforts, Commanda faced

discrimination and was never recognized for his success as a guide, nor for prospecting one of the largest gold mines in operation in the region. Commanda's legacy still lives, his courage is alive and growing in the march that bears his name and follows his traditional hunting trail that is now the town's main street, 3rd Avenue.

This year, the march drew on the Idle No More movement as an inspiration. Its goal was to demystify, expose and explain the grassroots movement's message. "Every year we try to identify a theme and this year we could not hold the march without connecting it to Idle No More," said Cloutier. "It is a movement of solidarity, a message of peace, and a message of pulling together for the protection of Mother Earth."

Although the Idle No More movement has brought pride and awareness to the First Nations communities across Canada it has also awakened the old animosity and prejudices that were given free rein in media reports and their online comment sections. "By having the

Gabriel Commanda March we are hoping to impart a positive message of unity and solidarity between peoples," said Cloutier. "We are connecting it to the Idle No More movement because we share the same message."

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination began in 1966, when the UN established the commemoration day in memory of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa. The 1960 atrocity by the country's apartheid government happened when white police officers murdered 69 black people at a peaceful demonstration. Since that time the racist government in South Africa has been replaced, but the work against racial discrimination is still an ongoing struggle for all people.

With much work left to be accomplished in the struggle to eliminate discrimination in all of its forms, the 13th annual Gabriel Commanda March showed that bringing people together for justice will eventually lead to change.



The Screaming Eagles (Lac Simon).

"We are happy to observe, year after year, how much the messages of peace and solidarity between peoples ring loud and true in the community," Cloutier said. "The Gabriel Commanda March has once again gathered people of all ages in a festive and pacifist ambiance."

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Opening up Men articulate their inner feelings at Wemindji wellness conference

by Eleanor Cowan

"The old adage that 'men don't cry' no longer applies," said Rev. Rod BrantFrancis of Wemindji's Anglican Church. "In fact, it takes a strong man to be able to show his feelings, to articulate his emotions and to admit that he doesn't have all the answers."

At the second event of its kind in Wemindji since summer 2011, Rev. Rod BrantFrancis and other participants at the Men's Wellness Conference spoke about the contrast between the manner in which they'd been brought up, and the positive changes for men that have occurred over time.

"I can remember what it was like for me," shared Pastor Randy DeCarlo of the Wemindji Christian Fellowship. "There wasn't any unconditional love. There was only conditional love. If I performed well, if I did a good job, then my father was pleased. If I couldn't perform, I was a disappointment. As a result, I learned not to take risks. I only did the things I could do well. I didn't want to disappoint. I learned to pretend that I was well. If another man asked me how I was, I'd say, 'Hey there, doin' good.' Men do this. No one of us would ever share that 10 minutes ago we wanted to jump off a bridge."

"To me, men's wellness means we are self-aware and balanced," said Wayne Rabbitskin, who travelled from Chibougamau to participate in the conference. "Old-fashioned beliefs about men's roles, added to a turbulent past we cannot change, caused a lot of fear in generations of Cree men. Fear can wrap a man up in chains. And it can cause men to behave in toxic ways that result in much shame, sadness and regret. The time has come to dismantle that armour and use love as our most important tool. Love has a ripple effect that goes on and on, for our children and grandchildren – and for their mothers."

"Wellness means men sharing the mistakes we have made in our lives and supporting each other through them. We men have a hard time admitting to our mistakes. Today, it is so good to be able to share our regrets with each other. Even at 50, I still need support," said Abraham Matches of Wemindji.

He added, "We need to polish our relationships, especially as fathers and grandfathers. We want to see our children move on, thrive and have all the happiness and security they deserve."

Together, the men talked about what they would advise young men today,



especially those who are daily barraged with violent songs, aggressive, addictive videos and false-promise advertising.

Here is their sage advice:

- There are excellent personal men's only workshops that teach wonderful wisdom in short, impressive bursts. Many men combine such opportunities with their vacation time and meet new friends in the process.

- Young men can also benefit by quiet retreats into the bush with experi-

enced Elders to learn the skills of hunting, fishing, resting, eating well and talking. There is much to learn from the birds that sing, the wind, the water and the land.

- Find a wise listener. There is enormous gain in confiding in one mature man, whether he is an Elder, or a young man who has become wise, early. Choose a man who is capable of respecting your confidentiality.

- Find or create a men's support group. You might ask your community to establish a meeting place. When you return from an out-of-town Men's Wellness Retreat, there should be men in your own community ready and waiting to greet you and to support you on a regular, on-going basis. You shouldn't have to go out of town for your support.

"It really boils down to feeling loved enough that you can finally tell others who you really are," said DeCarlo as he grabbed a 20-pound bag of potatoes and began to peel in preparation for a hearty men's dinner.



The image shows a collection of large, clear diamonds. A pair of tweezers is holding one diamond in the center, which is highly reflective. Other diamonds are scattered around it, some partially obscured. The lighting highlights the facets of the diamonds, creating bright reflections.

A monument for residential school victims serves to remind

On March 25, the Anishinabek Nation erected a monument to honour their citizens who suffered in the residential school system. The monument was unveiled by the Grand Council Chief of the Anishinabek Nation Patrick Wedaseh Madahbee in front of the head office of the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) in North Bay, Ontario.

The memorial is part of an initiative prompted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which seeks to honour those who were affected by residential schools. "We should look at the monument as a symbol of strength, not victimhood," said Madahbee. "It will remind visitors to our UOI headquarters that residential schools are a part of their history, as well as ours, and should not be hidden."

The purpose of this collaborative effort is to develop a pathway for education and healing. As a part of the project there is a narrative picture book, which illustrates the story of a girl who attended a residential school and the scars it left on her. All of the multimedia material will be available in the near future on an educational website.

The goal of the project is to dissipate the cloud of ignorance that has hung over this subject. "We know that it has only

been recently that the truth about Indian residential schools has started to be told and documented," Madahbee explained. "We also know that provincial and federal schools have limited and inconsistent curriculum on the subject." The lack of knowledge of what happened remains widespread and providing ways to inform the public is key to raising awareness.

Val-d'Or's Quality Inn wins three awards

Since opening in 2011, the Quality Inn and Suites Val-d'Or has already made quite the impression in the region with its award-winning services. On March 16, at the Grand Prix du Tourisme de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue held in La Sarre, the CREECO-run hotel managed to pick up three more awards to add to its impressive collection.

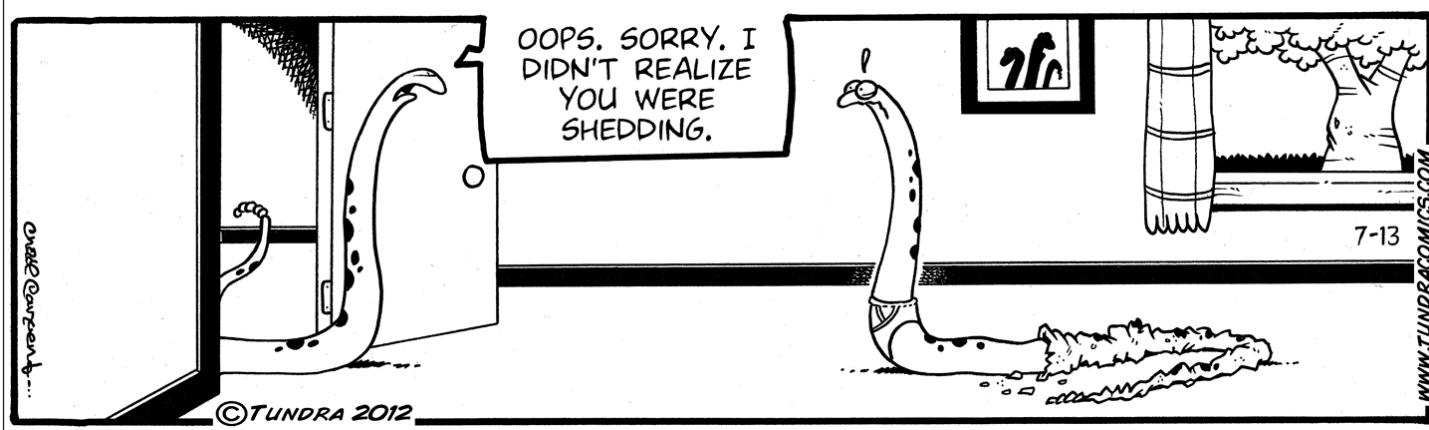
"These recognitions from our colleagues of the regional tourism industry serve as important encouragement for the personnel and shareholders of the hotel," says general manager Michael Prince. The three awards were given for excellence in the tourism industry of the region.

The hotel won in the category of Accommodation 40 to 149 units, which is awarded to hotels for innovation in service development, marketing and management. The award for Relève touristique was given to assistant manager Alexandre Audet. Front desk agent Alain Houle won the prize in the Tourism Employee category.

The award winners have a chance of being selected in the provincial level award ceremony that will be held in Gatineau on May 14.



Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com



Nishiyuu's epic journey

Hundreds of determined youth walkers make history and spread a message

Story and photos by Ernest Webb



Nadia Pouachiche with friend



Philip Rupert of Chisasibi with David Kawapit, from the original seven



Isaac Kawapit aka the white wizard... guide for the youth

As an eagle soared overhead, the Nishiyuu walkers took their final steps to Parliament Hill on March 25. Emotions finally caught up to the young men who embarked on this epic walk from Whapmagoostui to Ottawa. They hugged each other as speeches were made.

The hardest part of the journey was actually the first leg from Whapmagoostui to Chisasibi – about 100 kilometres as the crow flies. Stanley George Jr., Johnny Abraham, David Kawapit, Raymond Kawapit, Geordie Rupert, Travis George and Isaac Kawapit faced deep snow and wind chill of minus 50. Some of them even had second thoughts as they were weather-bound in their tents. Their guide, Isaac Kawapit, kept them together and made sure they reached Chisasibi.

From then it got easier as their spirits picked up and they were joined by other walkers. By the time they got to Maniwaki their numbers had grown to almost 300, having picked up walkers as they made their way through the Cree lands. Then they reached Algonquin territory and picked up even more walkers. The hardest part for many of them was walking on pavement, which caused blisters and sore feet the more they travelled. One of them had her feet tended to by a doctor and was informed that she would lose a toenail. Her response: “It’s a small price to pay.”

Many people watched the videos and viewed photos of jubilant walkers reaching their destination. The ones who didn’t make the news or the glory of posing for cameras at the finish line were the ones who limped their way in. These were the walkers with bad knees or cramps, whose every step was more painful than the last.

Friends and family patiently waited for them as the crowd dwindled. For many, these walkers were true warriors. One thing many people remarked on was that this was only the beginning. The Journey of Nishiyuu may have ended, but the work has only just begun.

Waiters & Walkers

The Nation's first-hand report of the historic arrival of the Nishiyuu Walkers

Story by Jessie Staniforth Photos by Ernest Webb



The Nation spoke to a few of the thousands of people waiting for the Nishiyuu walkers about why they had come out, and what the Journey of Nishiyuu meant to them. Here's what they said:

Vivian Snowboy, Mistissini

I'm overwhelmed. The feeling is unexplainable – there are no words for it. It's just pure joy. I've followed them since day one. I know a lot of them – many of my cousins are walking. I'm really proud. It brings all nations together. I really hope [as a result of this] that we will be treated better, especially where we live, on the reserves. Not to be pushed around – just to get that respect.



Clarissa Cookish, Ancita Mae Allain, Edward Cookish from Chisasibi

Ancita Mae Allain, Chisasibi

We are standing here looking, observing and being part of history. My oldest son Alex Etapp who is 23 years old joined from Eastmain. He's been walking ever since. He misses walking in the bush though. It's emotional, heart jerking it's amazing. Even before he joined i was crying everyday just seeing the pictures of the walkers arriving and leaving. It's amazing, invigorating i get excited. I believe each walker is on their own journey within this journey. Each of them have reasons to walk. I believe my sons journey is about freedom and reliving the experiences of his ancestors... all that comes to mind is freedom.



On the support bus

Candace Sheshamush, Whapmagoostui

We came down from North Bay, where I go to school. I wanted to show my support. I'm really proud of the youth who started this journey – that's where I'm from, so I feel very proud and emotional to be here today.

It's a small community, so I know all of [the original seven]. I find them very courageous to be doing this. A lot of people doubted them, but now they're here, and it's really unbelievable.

I hope there's more awareness of the issues, and I hope that people won't turn away from the issues that need to be resolved for this generation and for future generations. I hope that they will have a better chance of having a good future.

I think the walk will change them in a positive way. I find that they've changed so much, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. I've been following their web pages and I see the proof of it there.

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Donna Tenasco, Kitigan Zibi

We have a niece who's been walking since Kitigan Zibi. We're all really proud of her. She's of Algonquin and Mohawk ancestry, and she's been excited and overwhelmed every night... and exhausted. She's determined to do this, regardless of the bloody blisters on her feet, the cramping muscles. When she learned about this walk, that it was the youth who started it, she was determined to join and finish it, and she's finishing it today.

For the youth, and all First Nations people, what we're getting from this is a sense of unity. We're not doing it just for unity, but also to protect Mother Earth, because we see the abuse of the land and water – this famous Bill C-45 that is restricting the clean water. For First Nations people that's survival, that's living off the land. The young people saw this and they decided that it was time for the youth to rise up and do something about it, in support of Chief Theresa Spence and her hunger strike, and the Idle No More movement that started it. This is something that the youth have taken on. If you look at the walkers, they're all youth, and they've got a lot of support.

A lot of people are going to find their spirituality and want to learn about their cultures. As you know, First Nations people are at a high risk for suicide, crime, violence, jail and incarceration. I was talking to a lot of walkers on their way in, and they told me they're each doing it for their own reasons. Some to fight drugs and alcohol, some for suicide, some for missing and murdered women.



The Nation spoke to several walkers about their epic journey experiences.



On the steps of Parliament

Curtis Ratt, Chisasibi

I'm happy and sad at the same time that this will end soon. It makes you believe in your dreams.

William Head, Chisasibi

I've been walking for two months. My feet are suffering. But it feels great.



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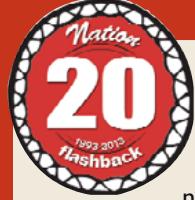


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The *Nation* is turning 20! To commemorate this historic occasion, the *Nation* is embarking on a retrospective countdown to its 20th Anniversary in November 2013. In the next 15 issues, the *Nation* flashback will feature some of the *Nation*'s stories, photos and award winning coverage throughout the years, which will be compiled in a 20th collector's edition issue. Brought to you by the FNISPAQ.

NEWS

July 11, 2003

SAGANASH BLASTS FEDS AT COMMONWEALTH

In a keynote address to an international Commonwealth indigenous peoples' summit in Georgetown, Guyana, Grand Council of the Crees' Special Envoy Romeo Saganash detailed the "gross disparities" facing aboriginal peoples across Canada, and called for the abandonment of ongoing federal policies of extinguishment of aboriginal rights.

Addressing leading indigenous peoples' organizations and governmental delegates from Commonwealth countries across the globe, Saganash condemned the federal policy of extinguishment of Aboriginal rights as leading directly to the "appalling" social conditions facing aboriginal peoples in Canada today.

The Grand Council's submission – based on analysis of all land claims agreements signed in Canada since 1975 and a number of secret Cabinet documents – established that the federal government is still aggressively extinguishing constitutionally-protected Aboriginal rights in all modern land claims agreements it signs.

Saganash pointed out that this is occurring in spite of international human rights judgments at the highest level declaring extinguishment a violation of fundamental human rights, and despite recent official representations by Canada to U.N. human rights entities that it has stopped requiring that aboriginal rights be extinguished in modern land claims agreements.

"Policies of extinguishment that are used to sanitize past injustices and dispossession will not bring about social or legal certainty," said Saganash.

"Aboriginal peoples in

Canada have learned through bitter experience that the only certainty gained through the federal government's comprehensive claims process is the lasting certainty of our continued poverty, marginalization and exclusion from the economic and political wealth now derived from our traditional lands."

The Commonwealth meeting called for an end to the "invisibility" of Indigenous Peoples in Commonwealth Americas, thus requiring the member States to give due attention to their fundamental human rights and their land and resource rights.

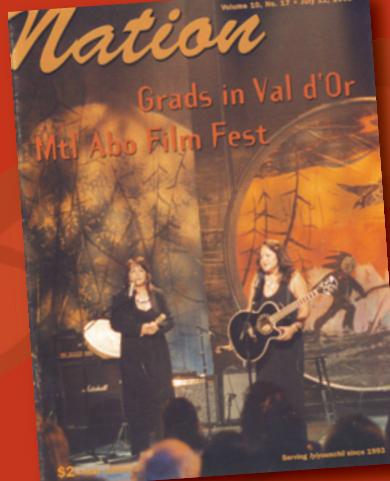
The delegates at the summit expressed strong concern over the ease with which countries have to this day disregarded the treaties or commitments made to them by the Crown over the centuries, including the recent past, to recognise and protect Indigenous Peoples rights to their land, resources, economies and way of life.

Even today the countries of the Commonwealth, be they "recently-independent" States or major "developed" States such as Canada and Australia, are slow to adopt appropriate measures to recognise land titles or return lands which are central to Indigenous Peoples governance and social cohesion.

The delegates also noted with concern the multiple discrimination against Indigenous women in Belize, Canada, Dominica, and Guyana, and their poor access to health care, employment opportunities, and welfare facilities.

These disadvantages prevented Indigenous women's essential role and contribution to the development processes of their communities.

Nation staff



Volume 10, No. 17

UPDATE 2013

Romeo Saganash has become a Member of Parliament for the New Democratic Party and still works to right the wrongs he blasted the Canadian government for in his previous role as the Grand Council of the Crees' director of Quebec relations and international affairs. He has introduced a private members' bill that would force the government to respect and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

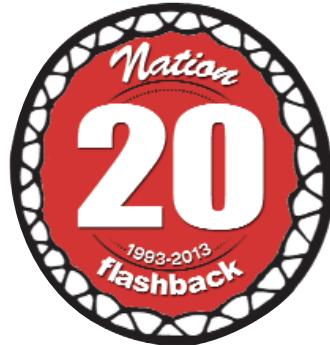




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Natives & Inuit still have limited access to appropriate resources and services to respond to the challenges faced by the increase in social problems. The First Nations & Inuit Suicide Prevention Association of Quebec & Labrador Dialogue for Life Conference addresses the needs of Native and Inuit interveners because they are the front line workers that are directly involved in helping and supporting their people.

Our objective is to bring people and organizations concerned and involved with the prevalence of suicide and other self-destructive behaviors such as violence, abuse and addictions in Native and Inuit communities. We encourage the sharing of community initiatives and experiences in suicide prevention and intervention.

Our annual gathering was advertised in the Nation and because of this, we are happy to announce that not only did we welcome over 200 Cree participants, but each Cree community was represented.



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From Chief Norman Hardisty Jr. and council

Harold Mukashish Jr., Lac Simon

I've been walking 16 days. I joined to support the seven walkers, to make an example for the youth generation. We need to protect the land, our mother, so the future generations can still go hunting in the bush and not forget our culture.



Chief Stanley George and son Stanley George Jr (original 7) and wife Laura Ekomiaq



Tara Martinhunter, Chisasibi

I'm from Chisasibi, but I started from Eastmain. I don't know why – I just, I had a dream about snowshoes. I had no idea why I had that. Then I found out about the Journey of Nishiyuu. There was shadows, clouds – there was everything there. I cried when I woke up. There was so many things changed: when I looked at my shoes, there was a different vision. When I went to Eastmain and I started walking, I looked at my snowshoes and I noticed they were the same [as in the dream], and I cried walking with my friends.

Prayer before leaving Chelsea for Ottawa



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Sage Mukash, Whapmagoostui

I started in Waskaganish in January. I wanted to join in from the beginning when David Kawapit Jr. told me what he wanted to do. It was a big idea for a 17-year-old. I wanted to support him any way I could. Finally, my parents let me join in Waskaganish. He really inspired me to go, to send a message that Aboriginal people are still standing strong, and we're not going to let anything happen to us.

This generation is sending this message clear. We're doing this, and we're going to do it for our kids and our grandchildren: our culture and language will not be lost.

I knew at times it would be really hard, but I kept going. There were times I wanted to quit because it was hard – mentally, emotionally and physically. But I had a lot of people tell me to stay, to motivate me.

I was walking first for my own personal issues – to fight depression. So, when they say you're not alone, you're not alone. Even if you think you are. There's a lot of people out there dealing with the same thing you are.

Tommy Lee Ratt, Chisasibi

What we have to do is continue from where we started, and build from it. This is not the end. If we can build for our community, that's all. Don't give up. There's always a new day – a better day.



Matthew Mukash



Picking up sandwiches for the last leg from Chelsea to Ottawa



Mary Shem from Whapmagoostui



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A TALK WITH

William MacLeod,

President/CEO of Cree Construction and Development Company Ltd

A Cree man from Mistissini, he was a Councillor at the Cree Nation of Mistissini for four years, then became Deputy Chief for two years. He continued as Executive Director for seven years, Director of Community Development for four years and Treasurer for two. Since 2002 he is the President of the Cree Construction and Development Company.



What is the Cree Construction and Development Company Ltd also known as CCDC and what does it do?

Watchiya. Founded in 1976, CCDC is owned entirely by CREECO and the beneficiaries of The James Bay Cree of Northern Quebec. CCDC is a construction company that provides construction services in both building construction and civil works. We have built the majority of the building works in Eeyou Istchee.

What are some of the projects CCDC has been working on?

Some recent projects include: Chisasibi-Elementary School, Mistissini-Clinic, Ouje-Bougoumou-Justice Building, Eastmain-Clinic and Sports Complex. Some successes in the past include: Camp Rupert-Specialized Dykes, Weir Projects with our Joint Venture partner Nemeska Eenou at EM1, Housing Project in Chisasibi 2-6plexes and 20 houses, Chisasibi Swimming pool, Eastmain Clinic. We have done an average annual gross volume of \$100 million a year.

That is a high volume of business. How do you define success in a project?

For CCDC we define success using a number of variables including: profitability, completion of projects on time and on budget, maximizing local resources including local contractors, maximizing local Cree employment wherever we operate and ensuring client satisfaction. We pursue the main goals and objectives of Creeco and the directives they give us.

Where does CCDC operate?

CCDC operates mainly throughout Eeyou Istchee. In some cases we bid as CCDC and in other cases we bid as a Joint Venture where we have partnerships within the traditional territory of the First Nation we are partnered with. We also have a partnership in Manitoba with the Tataskweyak Cree Nation known as United Cree Construction focused on Hydro development and in Ontario we have a partnership with the Marten Falls First Nation.

With major projects, there must also be major challenges?

Yes there always is. These challenges can be caused by a number of factors such as: weather, lack of equipment, lack of skilled workforce, engineer design flaws and so on. This creates a claims process. A claim is when you experience unforeseen circumstances that were not part of the bid document such as weather related, not the expected soil conditions or changes in the plans just to name a few. You have to continue the work and submit a claim to the client and justify the extra cost. Sometimes this can take months and even years to finalize.

In your most successful projects, what has determined those successes?

In any job your greatest assets are your people, your staff. The Project Manager plays a key role in ensuring that the contract is delivered successfully, he has to not only set up the operation but work closely with the community liaison and to get to know the local leadership and resources available. I would say it is the most important position on any project site.

How many people do you employ and how many are Cree?

In peak periods we have employed as many as 850 people and 50 to 55% or 425 to 467 people are Cree. In some of our projects our teams have been 100% Cree such as in Chisasibi with our Chee Bee Construction Company Joint Venture. During the winter months we slow down to about 400.

Where do you see CCDC in the future?

I see this company continuing to expand in the future providing opportunities for the Cree and playing a key role in the development of the North. We have been successful in building a large part of the Cree Infrastructure throughout the territory with a large part of the workers being Cree and it is something we are all very proud of. Our plan is to build on this success.

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Looking to the future

New film exposes the horror of Canada's residential schools

by Akiva Levitas

On an appropriately cold, rainy night March 12, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and Espace pour la vie Montréal screened *We Were Children* at the Botanical Gardens. Using vivid reenactments, the film sheds light on the disturbing crimes that disgraced Canada's residential schools.

With many survivors in attendance and the difficulty of the subject matter, precautions were taken in case anyone had trouble with what was being shown on the screen. Even for those who never had the experience, watching the film is bound to elicit strong emotions over the plight of helpless young children forcibly taken away from their families for years of physical, sexual and cultural abuse. After the screening there was a question-and-answer period where the commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada along with others shared their insight into this tough subject.

Produced in association with the National Film Board (NFB), *We Were Children* is available on its website for purchase or rental. "Justice begins when



Still from *We Were Children*

about what happened at Guy Hill Residential School in Manitoba. From being taken away from her parents for a "proper" education to the shocking sexual abuse she witnessed and endured at the hands of those entrusted with watching over the defenseless children. The film also covers the time after she left the school and her struggle to move on. Hart has stated that being filmed telling her story aided her in her healing process.

to all Canadians so that the healing can truly begin.

"All of the documentaries that we make are part of our history," said veteran Aboriginal director Alanis Obomsawin, who attended the screening. "It's not just for [the present] but it's for the future, for our children to know what the stories are and to be able to stand on their own two feet and feel good about who they are."

The importance of capturing the story on camera being told firsthand by survivors is important because if it isn't recorded for posterity once the last survivor dies there will be no one left to recount what happened. At the end of the film, Anaquod says that his last wish was to have his story heard. Sadly he passed before the completion, but his last wish is now being fulfilled.

For too long many of the survivors lived in silence as they dealt with their trauma. But with each step towards reconciliation the process of healing moves forward. With four years since the official apology for Canada's residential schools, the story is now being shown so that as a country, Canada will learn from its mistakes and move forward.

For more on Obomsawin and Perlmuter, check out their interviews on Nationnews.ca

"WE CANNOT HAVE JUSTICE WITHOUT THOSE STORIES BEING TOLD."

you uncover truth and tell stories of what happened, and we cannot have justice without those stories being told," said NFB chairperson Tom Perlmutter.

Tim Wolochatiuk, whose films frequently tackle difficult subjects, directed the film and his portrayal of what occurred in the residential schools comes to life in shocking detail as he focuses on the experiences of two survivors, Lynda Hart and the late Glen Anaquod.

Hart's participation marked the first time that she had ever spoken publicly

What Anaquod had to experience and the vile abuse he witnessed during his time at the Lebret Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan left many in the audience aghast. His struggles after leaving the school also serves as a testament to the long-lasting effects that these institutions had on all of those affected by them.

Although the story is one that many institutions in Canada would like to see go away, it is important that it be shown

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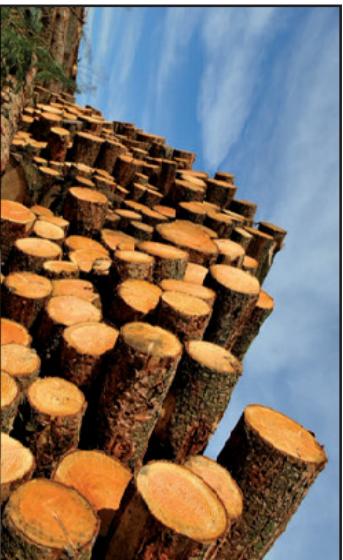
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Facing the past

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing in Chisasibi airs a painful chapter of Cree history

by Jesse Staniforth

In the lead-up to its four-day Quebec National Event in Montreal at the end of April, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) held the last of its four Quebec regional events in Chisasibi on March 19-20.

Following hearings in Sept-Îles, Val-d'Or and La Tuque, the Chisasibi TRC hearings offered an opportunity for local survivors of the Indian residential school (IRS) system to share their experiences either publicly or to have them recorded in private.

The community of Chisasibi, at the time it was located at Fort George, had two Indian residential schools, both of which opened in the mid-1930s – Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus, run by the Roman Catholic Church, and St. Phillip's, run by the Anglican Church (the only Anglican residential school in Quebec).

Chisasibi's Eddie Rupert is the Residential Schools Coordinator for the Grand Council of the Crees and a member of the Special Committee that is organizing the national event in Montreal. He says he suggested holding a commission hearing in Chisasibi because of the two schools that were located there.

Rupert explained that students at St. Phillip's came mainly from the coastal Cree communities, while students at Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus came largely from other communities, including Moose Factory, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany and Pointe-Bleu. According to TRC documents, both schools were seriously overcrowded by the 1950s, suffering from shortages of food and fresh water.

Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus was transferred to the provincial school board in 1971; St. Phillip's was taken over by the federal government in 1969 and turned into a residence for students from other communities attending local



photo courtesy of Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

schools. By 1973, its staff was entirely composed of Aboriginal people. Both schools were closed by the end of the 1970s.

Larry House, the local coordinator for the Chisasibi hearing, said it was long overdue. "The leadership needs to make it a priority to address the social issues. [Aboriginal people] still top the list of all the wrong stats. Right now we're the majority incarcerated in prisons and we've got the highest number of kids in state care. Obviously something is amiss. I connect it to the history of colonialism and residential schools is a big part of that."

Overall, said Rupert, the hearings went well, "We did have people who made the decision to go to the commissioner and tell their stories," he said. "We also had private rooms available and some people decided to take that approach. The main room was for the public – people were invited to attend and listen to the stories."

Rupert's only complaint was that fewer people came than he expected.

"I was hoping to have students coming in from the Cree communities who'd attended those two schools. There were not as many as I had hoped or expected. I know in some of the other hearings – in La Tuque, for example, the commissioner said they had about 80 people [making statements]. I'm not sure we had that many. The hearings did go very well, with those who volunteered to tell their stories. The overall message was that it was time to reconcile and forgive."

"In the beginning it was really slow," House noted. "I had to register to make a statement. I wanted to, because there was about 900 pounds of religion on one side of the room, there – two bishops and the minister from Great Whale. That's kind of an intimidating setting when you're sitting in the room. I spoke about organized religion and the problems I see there. I said, I had never been to residential school, but that's not to say I haven't been affected."

House downplayed the importance of his own comments, but Rupert praised him for speaking about the

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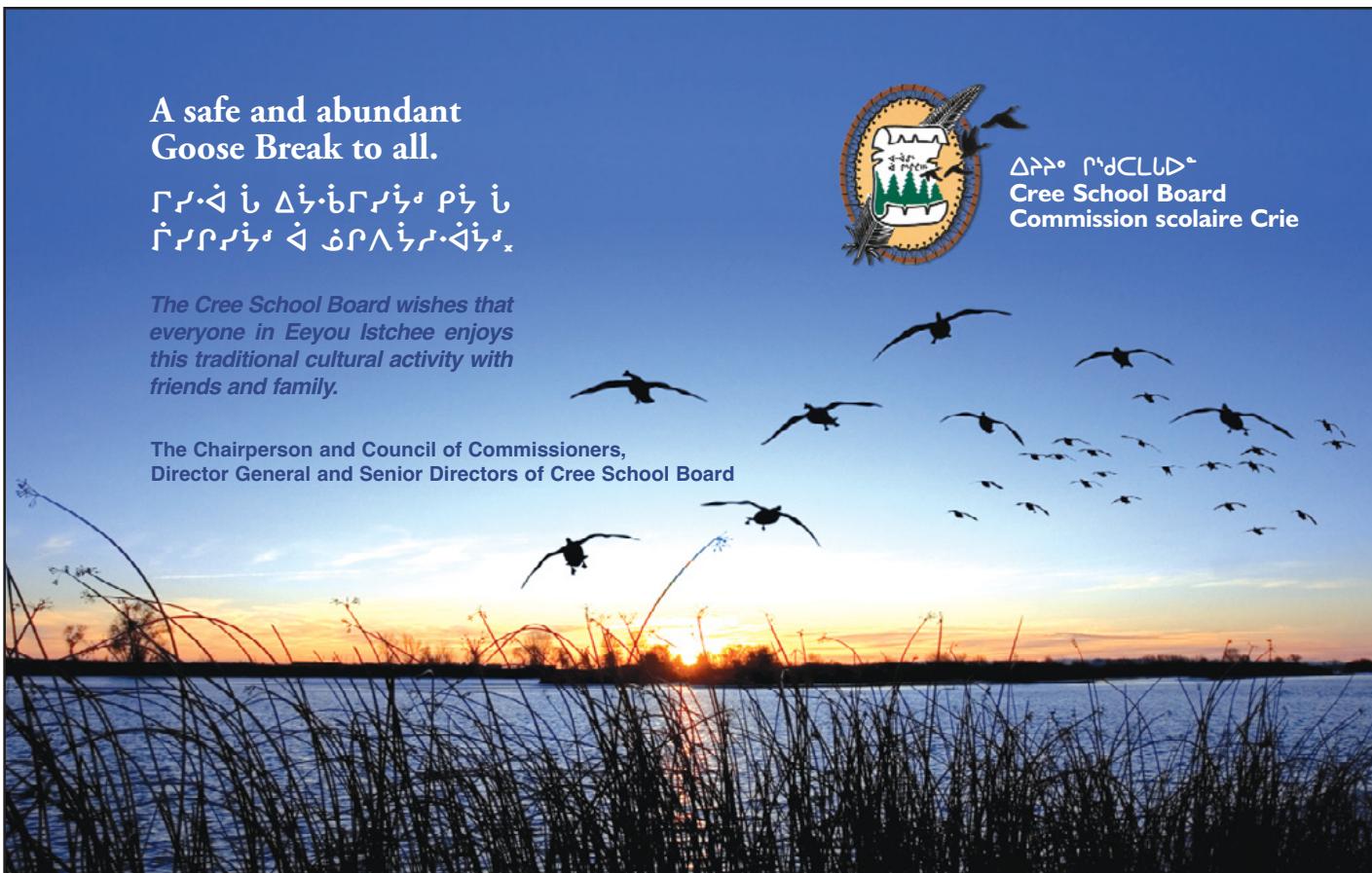
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The Cree School Board wishes that
everyone in Eeyou Istchee enjoys
this traditional cultural activity with
friends and family.

The Chairperson and Council of Commissioners,
Director General and Senior Directors of Cree School Board



effects of residential schooling on the generations that followed.

"Unfortunately both of his parents are passed on now," Rupert said. "But they both went through the system, and he talked about how residential schooling affects the children [of survivors]. It was very good that someone spoke about those intergenerational effects."

House would rather focus on the survivors who came out to share their stories.

"A lot of people were speaking out for the first time," he said. "Toward the end, more and more people came out, and a lot of private video statements were made. If we had kept going for another two days, it would have taken off."

Still, House said he regrets not having gotten word about the hearings out to a

said. "Maybe [survivors from those communities] are not ready, maybe they're waiting for the event in Montreal. They even have the option, after all the hearings are concluded, of sending in their stories to the research centre. It doesn't stop here. They can send in their stories any time they want – those who weren't quite ready for it. Some people would rather not talk about it and go about their lives. Some people say, 'It happened, so it happened. So why talk about it?'"

The national hearings in Montreal will be different, House agreed. "There'll be more people [from Eeyou Istchee]. People are just more comfortable sharing outside of their communities."

The important thing, he said, is that people are talking – both survivors and their children and grandchildren.

what needs to be expressed here, what has been suppressed for years: the unresolved grief. The energy that needs to be vented – it's like a pressure cooker.' I said, 'You know what, you're right, that's what needs to happen.'

House continued, "But it needs to be consistent. We need to have organizations – political organizations and the political will. The chief needs to be there and needs to support this. You can have all the economic development and agreements you want, but if you have sick people who practice the behaviours and traits of generations of being colonized, the internalized oppression, the internalized violence that takes place, nothing's going to work. We need to address those issues on a personal level."

Beyond the speaking of truth, the other half of the journey of the TRC hearings lies in coming to terms with reality of the stories shared by survivors.

With a dark laugh, House acknowledged he must work more on his own "reconciliation" part of this exercise, acknowledging his persistent anger. "After we finished, a lot of people were talking about a continuation into a community healing gathering. I said I'd help advocate for one."

Rupert says every part of the TRC process contributes to healing. "Some people [who attended IRS] didn't have bad experiences, but ones who did, talking about abuse – they probably had a lot more to say about the matter than those who didn't go through that. Most of the stories I hear are from survivors who had bad experiences. Those people need to tell their stories as a part of their healing. They have to get it out, to release whatever it is they're carrying, and they find it through these hearings. Telling their stories makes them feel better."

The hearings will continue April 24-27 in Montreal at the TRC's national event at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. Admission is free and all are invited to attend; the event will include statement collection, traditional ceremonies, survivor gatherings, an education day, films and cultural performances.

photo courtesy of Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

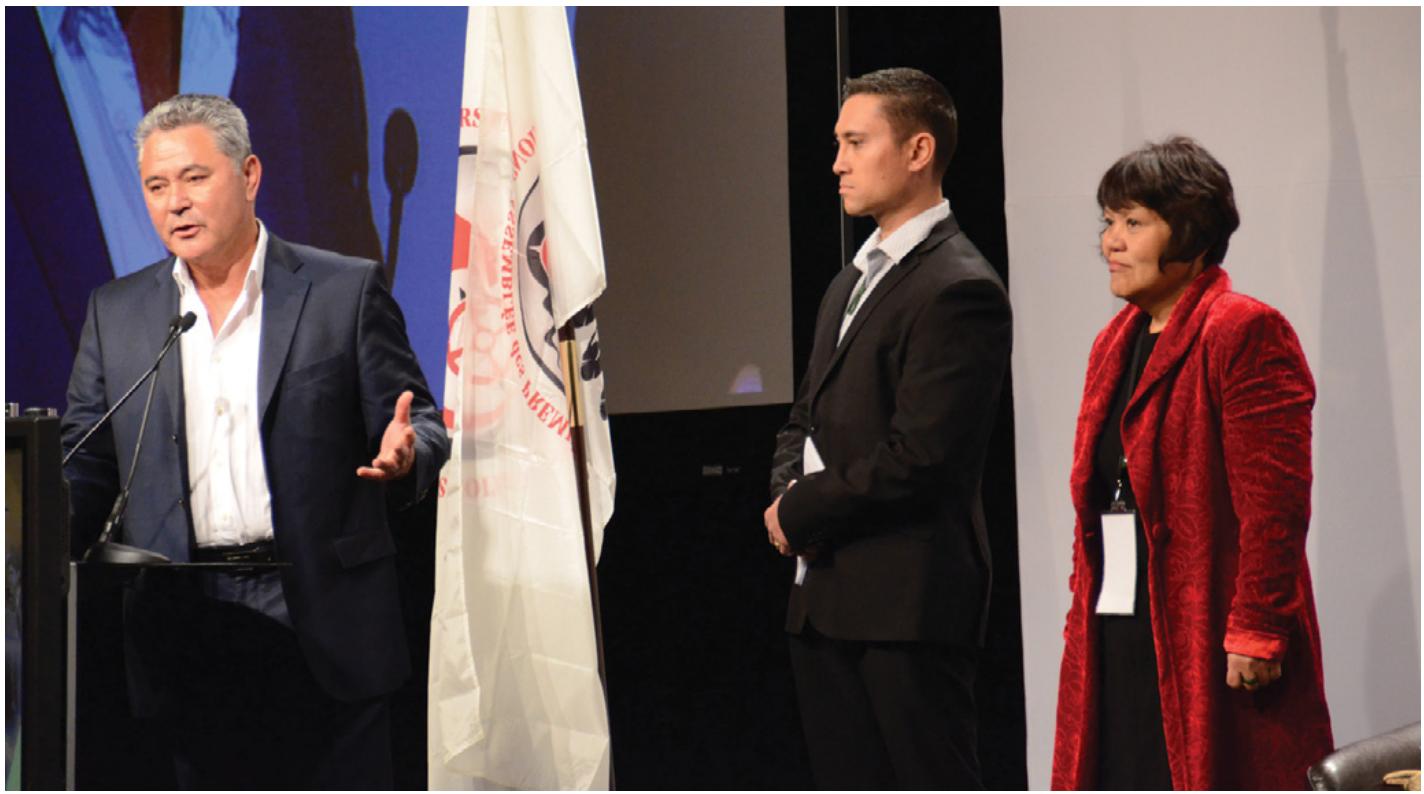


wider audience. "I became involved and early on I hadn't realized it was a regional event. I could have done more public notice regionally. The two schools [in Chisasibi], a lot of the students came from the southern neighbouring communities. But I have a feeling that everybody was aware."

Rupert, however, said he thought that the lower attendance at the Chisasibi hearings had nothing to do with any lack of publicity.

"They knew months ahead, and they even sent last-minute reminders," he

"Initially," House said, "I had a hard time thinking about it, because when I first met with the students, I said, 'Personally I'd feel robbed if none of the people who represented the government and the churches were sitting at the head table, if it's going to be only our people listening to our stories.' I'm prone to taking shots at the government and the churches now and then. One of my friends who had been to residential schools said, 'Why don't you think about like this: never mind what the government and the churches did. Think about



Connecting to the past

Youth Grand Chief discusses the two-day meeting devoted to Cree history

by Amy German



Two jam-packed days in Ottawa focused on passing on Cree history to the future generations. This landmark meeting couldn't have gone better, said Youth Grand Chief Joshua Iserhoff.

This event was held at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa March 16-17 to allow 200 Eeyou-Eenou college and university students to mingle with Elders, chiefs and Cree entity representatives, as well as political leaders including Liberal MP Justin Trudeau, NDP MP Romeo Saganash, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, New Zealand Maori politician John Tamihere, Cree Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come and former Grand Chief Ted Moses.

Over 500 Crees participated in roundtable events, panels and discussion cafes devoted to sharing the collective history of the Crees of Eeyou Istchee, and how this should be transmitted to the generations that will take over the Cree world.

"It was incredible to see all of these people come together for this cause, about how to educate the post-secondary youth about our collective history. We are trying to merge our past with our future here and I even found myself learning a lot," said Iserhoff.

As there is no specific textbook on the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and so much of the history of the Cree people is in the minds of those who experienced it firsthand, Iserhoff said that even during the planning stages the committee was discovering new things about the Cree Nation.

A prime example of this is the fact that since 1975 the Cree have actually signed 75 different agreements. And, while the creation and signing of each of these agreements was a tremendous accomplishment, the question then becomes how to convey that pride in the success achieved to another generation when in fact it may just look like a bunch of legalese to a young person who was not there to experience those events.

What was most pleasing to Iserhoff was that the members of the Cree Nation Youth Council (CNYC) have been asking to hear these stories.

Iserhoff said former Grand Chief Billy Diamond and entrepreneurial mastermind Albert Diamond had spoken to a CNYC event but now they are both gone and with them a huge part of Cree history since the crucial years of the 1970s.

"When these two men died their momentum continued along with the youth and this got back to Abel Bosum who wrote a letter to Grand Chief Coon Come requesting that we come together like this. And so we have formed this Round Table on Capacity Building to educate our youth," said Iserhoff.

In his opinion, the most valuable thing that happened at the event was that the youth got to meet individuals who were and are at the forefront of the Cree Nation to hear their stories firsthand.

felt like at the signing. We got to know our leaders on a personal level and connect with their spirit," said Iserhoff.

Iserhoff said he was told by many of the youth how amazing it was to get to know their leaders in a more candid context. As many of the leaders of the Cree Nation are living historical figures, that is the context in which the youth see them. Hearing their stories brought this history to life and broke down those barriers.

On top of that, all of the attendees at the Round Table got the opportunity to hear people like Liberal leadership frontrunner Justin Trudeau and National Grand Chief Shawn Atleo talk about education in the context of First Nations youth. As Iserhoff explained, the focus of both talks was post-sec-



This made important parts of Cree history come to life.

Iserhoff said the event also made way for the stories of lesser-known individuals who played roles in events like the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975. Prior to the event he had never known that Elder Edna Neposh had a large part in it, and now he got to hear about it directly from her.

Getting to hear firsthand how Robert Kanatewat experienced the signing was another incredible moment, Iserhoff explained.

"What was achieved here was that we were suddenly able to feel what they

ondary education as both had previously worked in education.

Discussion of employment needs and shortfalls was the topic of a major presentation by Nian Matoush. For the first time ever, these post-secondary youth and the leadership from the Cree nation had the opportunity to look at important statistical information on education levels in the Cree nation, where the job market demands are, and how well the Crees actually stand when it comes to filling those positions.

Iserhoff served as the moderator throughout the event, asking planned questions to motivate the telling of this history and asking questions on behalf of



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some youth who felt too shy to address the leadership directly.

He laughed, saying that he felt like the Cree George Stroumboulopoulos or Oprah Winfrey, helping the stories come out of the various panels on the agreements, governance, employment and other major issues.

At times he said he had to ask the panels difficult questions about sovereignty over the territory and waters but, because the whole event was about hearing Cree history from a first-person point-of-view and understanding the emotion behind these major events, it was eye-opening to hear the reasoning behind those who signed the actual agreements.

Reports will be published on the event and a committee will be set up to carry out the many suggestions and decisions that resulted. But, as Iserhoff admits, it was a lot to process.

"There were about 10 major meetings at the event and the thing is that we can't just step away from this event and say that is it. We are going to have a second phase to this where we go into each of the communities for those who were not able to come so that we reach everybody in the Cree territory," said Iserhoff.

According to Iserhoff both of the youth of the CNYC and the local youth chiefs as well as the GCC will be spearheading this initiative.

Closing the event, Grand Chief Coon Come summarized much of what took place. The following includes excerpts from his speech.

"Please take the time to reflect on what you have been told this weekend, talk to each other and talk to your fami-



lies. Each and every one of you has been challenged this weekend to take on a great responsibility and to make a contribution to the further building of our Cree Nation.

"You have been challenged to grasp just what the mission of your generation is and you have been asked to rise to the occasion and meet that challenge head-on. What you have been challenged to do is to be responsible for the future of the Cree Nation. And I know this is not an easy burden for you to think about. It is, however, the truth. The future of the Cree Nation... our ability to build on the struggles, the achievements and the historic agreements of the last 40 years... our ability to create an Indigenous Nation as a model for the

world... seizing the opportunity to be the major economic and political force of northern Quebec... fulfilling the vision of becoming the 'masters of our destiny'... all that will rest on your shoulders.

"What is common to both your generation and my generation is that destiny has called upon us to be pioneers. My generation – and we were all very young at the time – was called upon to protect the Cree way of life, to protect our land and resources, to bring the living conditions in our communities out of the Third World, and to take on the responsibilities of operating and managing our communities, our new entities and our regional administration. We had a huge responsibility placed upon us and we also needed to reflect on how to respond to the challenge. We needed to reflect on what it all meant for our collective futures as communities and a Nation, and we needed to reflect on what it all meant for us as individuals.

"You have heard this weekend what the challenge is for your generation. It is no less difficult a challenge and no less an important challenge than what my generation faced.

"When the challenge was placed before my generation, we were not ready for it. We had not expected or anticipated it and we didn't see it coming. The James Bay Hydroelectric Project was announced and when we heard about it everything changed. The day when we heard about the project was profoundly different from the day before and our world, suddenly, was very different. Some of us had plans for our futures, some of us had ideas of what we might like to do with our lives, and some of us were simply exploring all kinds of different possibilities. All that changed, and we needed to reflect, to re-orient our lives and to go in directions we never imagined we would go.

"We were all called upon to put on hold our personal plans, our individual goals, and to blaze a new trail and to enter uncharted territory on behalf of our Nation. It is that pioneering spirit that your Nation is now asking you to take on."



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Shedding light on Native issues

Concordia students find out more about federal Aboriginal policies

by Akiva Levitas

Federal policy is sometimes tough to follow as all the major political parties aim to paint themselves in the best possible light. Through press conferences and staged events it is tough to be certain where each party stands on issues of Aboriginal policy.

Questions were asked and answers were debated as the representatives of three Concordia University's political clubs argued federal Aboriginal policies on March 21. The Political Science Student Association (PSSA), in collaboration with the Student Association for Voter Empowerment at Concordia (SAVEC), organized the debate titled "The Perfect Aboriginal Policy: A Broken Dream?"

Despite the passion behind their counterarguments, debaters Erik Scanlon (Conservative Party), Cameron Ahmad (Liberal Party) and Alex Tyrell (New Democratic Party) maintained a respect for one another as they voiced their party's policies. The Green Party was invited but its representative could not attend the debate.

What all three parties agreed on was that First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities were lagging behind the rest of

Canada in crucial sectors and that comprehensive action by the federal government is necessary.

"It's going to take a lot of money but we are indebted to Aboriginal people," said Tyrell as he spoke of the need for better housing and water quality for Aboriginal communities.

The debate also included a question period. Directed towards the Conservative representative, an audience member asked: "Even Colombia has a better approach to Native issues than the Canadian government has right now. And my question to you is with this fact, how do you respond? Why don't you let UN experts come in and assess?"

The question was asked in response to Scanlon declaring that Canada should not act upon the recommendations of the United Nations regarding human-rights abuses in Canada. "When you have Iran, Sri Lanka and, in some instances, Saudi Arabia, we find it somewhat unbalanced and hypocritical to issue reports against Canada when they don't even have their own houses in order," he said.

The debate touched upon many of the past federal actions towards the Aboriginal community. The Liberals held up the 2005 Kelowna Accord as a crowning achievement in Aboriginal policy, which was quashed by the Harper government. Moving forward, Ahmad said, "The first thing [the Liberal Party] will have to do is replace the Indian Act, which is a colonial paternalistic vestige of the past with a comprehensive framework such as what we saw in the Kelowna Accord."

This is only the second debate that SAVEC has organized in cooperation with the PSSA in an effort to bridge the divide between students and the political world. "I created SAVEC because I thought that we needed a vehicle in order to inform students that there was a link missing between politics and students," said Paola Rivas, founder of SAVEC.

Building awareness of Aboriginal issues should not come from a top-down approach in which government officials selectively choose what issues to focus on but from a grassroots pushed towards the top. The Journey of Nishiyuu is delivering a message to the government and spreading the word throughout Canada, but it is only when all Canadians get involved do these issues get resolved.

The Concordia debate was an effort by a small group of students determined to raise public awareness on these issues. Although it was only a small part in the struggle to bring the issues into the mainstream, many of those in attendance were left with a better understanding of the policy positions of the three major political parties in regards to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

For more on the debate, check out the video on nationnews.ca



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Fun at the food show

The Manger Santé et Vivre Vert expo serves up a bevy of new eats

by Amy German

It was all about quality, purity and going organic at this year's Manger Santé et Vivre Vert March 15-17, when the Nation made its annual pilgrimage to investigate trends and sample the latest healthy food fare.

While in previous years a particular buzz food – such as blueberries, pomegranate or elderberries – has always been touted as the newest miracle cure, this time it seemed every booth had an organic/purity slant.

With so much talk in the media about food safety and product recalls, Canadian and US refusals to label genetically modified (GMO) foods and unsustainable farming practices leading to major issues like soil erosion, it's a wonder that we hadn't seen this trend being pushed sooner.

Perusing the aisles of this mega-show with thousands of other patrons, the first thing I came across was a tomato-packed kiosk labeled, "Le Pays de Tomate" ("Tomato Land") hosted by Tomates Lacoste.

"These are tomatoes produced in the Charlevoix region in eastern Quebec. They have an incredible quality as the water in that region is very pure and crystalline and the air is fine and fresh and so environment is ideal. They are the best tomatoes on earth!" exclaimed Fanny Drouin of Tomates Lacoste.

Sampling the merchandise, the cherry tomatoes were amazingly fresh; they were sweet, firm and bursting with juices upon first bite. They possessed a candy-like quality so you could almost

(onion) oil as well as a grape-seed oil that was perfumed with vanilla. While mesmerizing on its own, they suggested using it on waffles and pancakes or in muffins.



eat them like a treat instead of a dietary staple.

Next up, I was drawn to the Épices de Marie Michèle booth to enjoy a variety of new salt, spice and flavoured oil products from this Quebec company.

They were offering tastings of flavoured oils. There was a lovely "garden" olive oil that was seasoned with various vegetables and herbs that is ideal for salads. They also featured shallot

What was really interesting was that it contained absolutely no sugar and yet was so reminiscent of the vanilla birthday cake of my childhood that I found myself swept up in nostalgia. It was truly impressive.

Michèle said that using this oil for cooking pancakes or waffles produced incredible results.

For more info: www.lesepices.ca/

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* You may only register once for the draw. Anyone who registers more than once for the contest will be disqualified and have his or her name removed from the draw. To participate, it's mandatory that you are a status member of an Aboriginal nation (on or off reserve). Only participants aged 18 or older will be eligible for the draws.

In collaboration with the Business and Community Service of Centre d'études collégiales à Chibougamau - <http://www.seccol.com/>



If you've been hearing a lot about quinoa, it may be because officials from the United Nations and the Andean countries of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia launched the International Year of Quinoa in February. The idea behind this is to raise awareness of the incredible nutritional, economic, environmental and cultural value of a food that has been cultivated for thousands of years.

On hand at the show was Clara and husband Martin from GoGo Quinoa, a popular brand that has created a series of quinoa-based products, including pastas, chips, hot cereals, pancake and cake mixes.

"Quinoa is delicious on its own; it has a high nutrition profile and that is what makes quinoa so special. It is gluten free, plus it is high in protein so you can use it to replace meat in a meal. You are making a green choice if you choose to eat it in lieu of commercial meat," explained Clara.

For those who have never tried it, the nubby little grain is a bit like a couscous or a rounded rice but larger and chewier and contains significantly more protein. Using it as an alternative to your average starch is a wonderful way to add a lot of nutrient value to a meal while reducing fats and processed foods.

For more info:
www.gogoquinoa.com/

For those unable to buy organic produce locally, the Jardins de l'Écoumène booth offered seeds to those willing want to grow their own. And, while many in Eeyou Istchee are faced with a very short growing season, it was suggested that indoor pots for tomatoes would be a great way to grow something delicious at home.

"You can grow all sorts of varieties of cherry tomatoes and we also have all sorts of heirloom seeds that are becoming popular again. These tomatoes are different because the skin is pretty velvety and they are very attractive," said Jean-François, the gardening expert manning the booth.

For more info: www.ecoumene.com
For those looking for a green way to clean their homes or residue-free detergents that are ideal for those with skin

allergies, Bio-Vert was on hand to showcase their locally made Quebec products.

Sophie from Bio-Vert recommended the company's new floor cleaner, which she says has the same muscle as other floor cleaners without polluting the environment or leaving any chemical residue. A certified ecological product, these cleaners blow apart any myth that something natural can't do the same job as a chemical-based product. Take that Mr. Clean!

For more info: www.bio-vert.com/

When it came to other cleaning products, one thing I found myself completely unsure of was the Laundry Ball by



SmartKlean, a futuristic-looking pod for your laundry that claims to replace one year's worth of detergent.

Apparently, this mineral-laden contraption can save you hundreds of dollars and spare the environment while it spins around your washing machine.

While I would need to see it to believe it, I would love to hear from anyone willing to give it a shot.

For more info: www.smartklean-canada.com/

Over at the Café AGGA table I was delighted to see a wonderful solution to a nagging environmental problem. While Keurig and Nespresso coffee machines are all the rage (especially in Eeyou Istchee), they have also created an incredible amount of waste.

Café Agga has come up with a solution by making its own biodegradable packaging. It makes an incredibly delicious espresso without the guilt of wrecking the environment with needless waste.

The coffee being sampled was "Espresso Orgasmo" and the name summed it up. Wow!

For more info: www.cafeagga.com/

This year I was given the opportunity to take home a number of products to test and review.

First up was a product called Stress Rescue L-Theanine (chewables) by SISU, an all-natural relaxation product that the woman behind the counter claimed was great for anyone who finds that they can't stop their mind from racing.

The tablets tasted like a Sweet Tart candy and, lo and behold, 20 minutes later, I actually did feel relaxed. With this expo being held in a frenzied, jam-packed room, I was certainly feeling stressed prior to taking the tablet. It gets my stamp of approval!

For more info: www.sisu.com/

I also had the opportunity to take home a canister of Genuine Health's Greens+ in acai and mango flavour for review. And I have to say I am hooked!

I had heard about the "superfood antioxidants" powder offered as a daily supplement, to which you add water and drink. Friends who had used it said it made them feel great.

The sales rep said the product makes your body more alkaline as opposed to acidic thus strengthening the immune system. It also cleanses the body and strengthens cells, he said, improving digestion and improving the appearance of your skin.

I decided to take this product instead of a vitamin for the last 10 days and I can attest to the fact that it gives you an energy boost – plus my skin has never looked better. While it can't perform miracles, I think it could be a great thing to take if you find yourself in a situation where lots of leafy greens are not readily available.

For more info:
www.genuinehealth.com



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The \$20 bill is used with permission of the Bank of Canada.

by Lyle Stewart

A date for the General

A landmark trial for genocide and crimes against humanity concluded last week in Guatemala City, though you could be forgiven for not having heard of it. The trial of former Guatemalan dictator and army General José Efraín Rios Montt and his one-time intelligence chief, José Mauricio Rodríguez Sánchez, for wiping entire Indigenous Mayan communities off the map has been almost completely ignored by Canadian media.

More than 440 Mayan villages were destroyed during Rios Montt's 16-month reign of terror. One shouldn't speculate, but the fact that the victims of the scorched-earth campaign he launched after seizing power in a CIA-backed coup d'état in May 1982 were uniformly impoverished Mayans may explain the disinterest.

Nonetheless, this trial has the power to change history. If a guilty verdict is delivered when the judge's decision is expected (in roughly two months), it will mark the definitive end to the impunity enjoyed by a series of right-wing totalitarian leaders in Latin America over the past several decades. For the Maya Ixil people of Guatemala's northwestern Quiche department, it will cap a years-long struggle for justice.

Suspected of sympathizing with Guatemala's left-wing insurgents, soldiers targeted Ixil villages for a campaign of rape, torture, arson and indiscriminate massacres. One witness, Nicolas Brito, testified about a 1982 army attack on his village of Canaque. He told of seeing soldiers attack a large group of Ixil women. "The soldiers tore the victims' hearts out and put them on a little table," Brito told the court. "They piled them there."

Other witnesses described how toddlers and suckling babies were also savagely murdered and mutilated.

For Montreal lawyer Elisabeth Patterson (who also works the Grand Council and the Cree Health Board), the treatment of the Maya in Guatemala is consistent with the historical racism among the country's Spanish-descended elite against the majority Indigenous population. Patterson works with Lawyers Without Borders Canada, which worked with victims' groups in Guatemala to prepare for the trial. She attend-

ed much of the trial's proceedings this winter along with fellow Lawyers Without Borders member Philippe Tremblay.

"The Mayans were seen as something less than human," Patterson told the Nation. The threat remains, she adds, telling of an encounter this winter with a pair of "cowboy types" during a demonstration by a group of Mayan women. "I could hear them speaking behind me. One of them said, 'Rios Montt should have finished the job.'"

Patterson and Tremblay first got involved in Guatemala as students back in the mid-1990s with Project Accompaniment,

HE EXPLAINED TO US THAT DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE SHOULD BE KEPT APART. "THE BIRDS DON'T MIX WITH THE FISHES," HE SAID.

a movement that paired First World observers with returning communities as a way to ensure their safety from the armed forces and right-wing death squads that had chased them from the country in the previous decades.

Now, says Patterson, these former refugees are refusing to remain victims; they are empowering themselves by organizing to demand justice for the crimes against humanity they experienced during the long civil conflict.

To convict Rios Montt and Rodríguez Sánchez of genocide, the law requires two thresholds be met: that there was a systematic and massive attack against a specific population; and that intent be proven.

"The testimonies heard last week all support that conclusion," Tremblay affirmed.

If convicted, Rios Montt and his former intelligence chief face life in a Guatemalan prison. This may end up having more symbolic importance than the actual penalty, Tremblay observes. Rios Montt is 86 years old. But to prove to Guatemalans that the perpetrators of crimes against humanity no longer enjoy the impunity that sheltered them from justice over all these years, indeed, afforded them a place among the political and economic elite, a freer democracy that respects human rights may finally have the opportunity to take root and grow.

...

Far from the cooler temperatures and green mountains of Guatemala's northwest Altiplano that is home to the Maya Ixil, the Caribbean coastal town of Livingston is a hot, dusty outpost largely populated by the descendants of black slaves. The town caters to a trickle of adventurous tourists drawn largely to nearby natural wonders such as the River of Seven Altars, a shady paradise of gentle waterfalls and cool pools that drains into the Gulf of Mexico.

That's where my compañera and I went to take a two-day breather from an at-times tense human-rights fact-finding mission we joined in the summer of 1990 to report on the conditions of Guatemalan refugee camps in the southern Mexican states of Chiapas and Quintana Roo, as well as in clandestine

in-country hideouts during the last stages of Guatemala's 40-year civil war.

Having been not so subtly shadowed by state intelligence agents from one end of Guatemala all the way east to the ferry that took us to Livingston, we intended to briefly but legitimately play at being North American tourists for our safety and mental well-being.

And that's where, of all people, we ran into Efraín Ríos Montt, who was then campaigning for president in that year's national elections (though he would later be disqualified for having previously seized power in a coup).

We interviewed him about his campaign and human-rights abuses, but his replies were short and nonsensical homilies distilled from the theocratic teachings of his evangelical Protestant sect that he had joined after rejecting the Catholic Church as too left-wing. He explained to us that different groups of people should be kept apart. "The birds don't mix with the fishes," he said.

We didn't stay long; menacing bodyguards in mirrored aviator glasses were clearly put off by this pair of impertinent norteamericanos. And it was a chilling encounter with a man we knew to be a monster. But little did I expect then that the desperate people we met in Mexico and in Guatemalan safe houses would finally, 23 years later, get their date with justice, or that justice would be brought to Ríos Montt.

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Remembering my father

by Xavier Kataquapit

I can't believe I am writing words dedicated to the passing of my dad, Marius Kataquapit (October 26, 1938 – March 13, 2013). His death from a heart attack has left a hole in my own heart that I know will never fully heal, though it will get better with time. Dad was very much a larger-than-life, fun-filled character in the life of my family and whenever we were with him, he often punctuated our time with laughter and smiles.

He was also someone who thought of life and death a lot. He prepared us for these realities in so many ways when we were young. He often reminded us that we only have a short time in this existence and that we should enjoy life.

Dad was an adventurous spirit and he wanted to see as much of the world as he possibly could. He planted that seed of adventure in me and it was one of the main reasons why I left my northern home.

In his own way, he saw as much of the world as he could. He travelled up and down James Bay by foot, by water and by air. He prided himself in knowing just about every river, creek and waterway along James Bay. As a young boy at the age of 12 or 13, he actually started working as a guide for visiting American fishers and hunters. When he was a teenager, he often left his family to head out alone on the land to hunt, trap and fish to sustain himself and his family. He thought nothing of wandering hundreds of kilometres by snowshoe to get to the next river, the next lake or just to see how far he could go. He did this travelling in the wilderness with only a few supplies, an axe, matches and snowshoes.

He was a survivor of the residential school system. Even though this made it difficult for him as a Catholic, he still held a strong faith and was a proud member of the Church. He was happy to call the local parish priest, Father Vezina, a good friend.

When he was 16, he left James Bay to find adventure and work in the south. He went to work for forestry companies and that took him to non-Native towns and cities where he was dazzled by different ways of living. During his travels he also saw and met small business people who operated shops, stores, farms and machinery of all sorts, which fuelled his imagination of what he could do for himself later on.

He kept travelling and eventually landed a job with the northern railroad where he worked as a lineman with a travelling crew. This work suited him well as he was now able to move from town to town to see new places and meet new people.

When he returned to the north, he was strong, full of stamina, and without fear. He made it his goal in life to become the best, the strongest and the hardest-working person in his community.

Early on in his life dad suffered his first great loss when his mother Janie died in a tragic house fire. He did his best to care for his father James.

As he reestablished himself in the north, he also discovered someone who would help him fulfil his hope of a life as a father. He fell in love with a young woman named Susan from the Paulmartin clan, a close-knit family group that wanted the best for their young daughter.

The Kataquapits had done their best to raise their large family through hard times.

While dad courted his new-found love, he knew that he would have to prove himself to be worthy, so he worked twice



Marius Kataquapit on the rail line in western Saskatchewan in 2007.

as hard as anyone else in the Paulmartin family. At one point, Xavier, the Paulmartin family head, told him that he needed to slow down and that there was no need to kill himself with work. Soon after, dad was accepted into the family and he married Susan.

Mom and dad spent their early marriage in Moosonee and Moose Factory, where dad was able to find steady work for a few years and then decided to move back to Attawapiskat.

I was always fascinated by the fact that just about everyone on the James Bay coast knew Marius Kataquapit. He seemed to endear himself to many people in one way or another.



Public Notice

March 18, 2013

Whabouchi Mining Project Federal Funding Available

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is making available \$30,600 to support public participation in the federal environmental assessment of the Whabouchi Mining Project located in Québec.

Funding will be provided to eligible individuals and groups to enable their participation in upcoming steps of the environmental assessment such as consultation related to the Environmental Impact Statement and consultation on the draft Environmental Assessment Report.

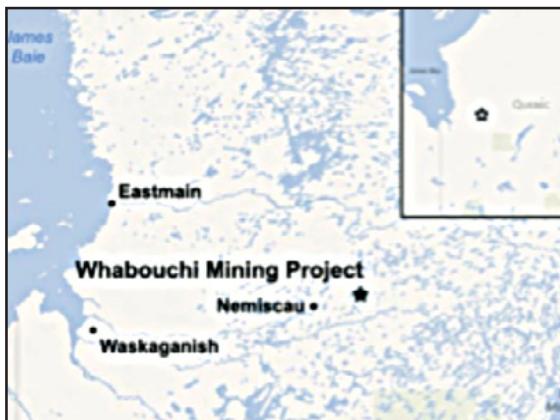
Applications received by April 17, 2013 will be considered.
Recipients will be announced at a later date.

To apply for funding or for more information on the project and the environmental assessment process, visit the Agency's website at www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca (registry reference number 80021) or contact the Participant Funding Program by writing to PFP.PAfp@ceaa-acee.gc.ca or by calling 1-866-582-1884.

The Agency's Participant Funding Program also provides funding specifically to Aboriginal groups to assist them to prepare for and participate in consultation activities associated with federal environmental assessment. The amount of funding allocated will be announced at a later date.

The proposed project

Nemaska Lithium inc. is proposing the construction, operation and decommissioning of an open pit spodumene mine for the production of lithium. The Whabouchi mine is located at 30 km of Nemiscau and 280 km north of Chibougamau. As proposed, the project includes the operation of an open pit, waste and tailings impoundment area, a concentrator of ore as well as administration buildings and maintenance. The mine would produce about 3 000 tonnes of ore for 23-year life span.



As part of the strengthened and modernized *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* put in place to support the government's Responsible Resource Development Initiative, the Agency is conducting a federal environmental assessment of this project.

This project is being assessed using a science-based approach. If the project is permitted to proceed to the next phase, it will continue to be subject to Canada's strong environmental laws, rigorous enforcement and follow-up and increased fines.



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takes you.



When dad returned to Attawapiskat he reconnected with his large extended family and he often went out on the land with his brothers Gabriel, Alex, Leo and George to hunt, trap and fish on their traditional area. They all liked to have a laugh and even though they did the serious business of gathering food for their families, their camp was often full of good humour and fun. Dad was also happy about returning to the community so that he could spend time with the rest of his family, including his older brother Thomas, younger brother David and their sister Celine.

Anyone who knew dad understood that he was someone who could never stand still for long.



Marius Kataquapit with his wife Susan Kataquapit during a visit to Lake Louise.

He found employment as a hospital maintenance man for several years. While he learned the trade of fixing, repairing and maintaining the operations of the local hospital, he kept searching for more work. Through his connections with the hospital, the church, local leadership, the school, the Hudson Bay Company (which later became Northern) and just about every business associated with the town, he searched for contracts, business ideas and employment of any type to support his growing family. He acquired the transportation contract for the local store, and using farm tractors, trailers and trucks, he employed local young men and later recruited his sons to manage this business. By the time, most of us boys were teenagers, we were at the airport three times a week, lifting, hauling, moving and transporting just about everything that came into the community.

While we lived in our crowded home, dad at one point took in his father James to live with us. Mooshoom was a First World War veteran and, just like his son, he enjoyed making his grandchildren laugh with silly things he did. Dad took great comfort in seeing his father at home with his grandchildren.

Dad became one of the major entrepreneurs in Attawapiskat and we followed him through all of his projects. We learned about carpentry, woodworking, machinery operation and maintenance, as well as welding, plumbing, heating,

electrical and just about any other trade you can think of. The greatest accomplishment he achieved through all this was to instill in his sons and daughters the idea that we could do anything we wanted.

As dad aged to become an Elder in the community and his strength and ability gave way, his grandsons and granddaughters provided him a second wind.

His greatest regret came when he lost his 16-year-old son Philip on Christmas Day in 1990. Philip was a charismatic youth who was adored by many people from his home community and his friends along the James Bay coast. The hole in dad's life that was left by this loss diminished somewhat over time as he saw his children grow to give him grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

His spirit also fell when he lost his young grandson Nicholas, son of Lawrence and Christine. He also had to deal with the loss of brothers Gabriel, David and Thomas.

He dealt with the pain of losing his loved ones in the only way he knew: he kept working. He developed new business projects that included a laundromat, two restaurants, a winter road transportation business, freight hauling, a guiding business, a hotel and a sawmill.

I know he never really understood my interest in writing and many of my choices in life but I also know he loved me dearly. He was proud of his grandchildren and the steps they were taking to better their lives at home and in cities and towns to the south.

He confided in me once on a road trip out west that his key to success in life was his wife Susan. Dad always enjoyed talking about how proud he was of his sons Lawrence, Mario, Antoine, Joseph, Paul and of course myself. He was so happy with all the successes of his daughters Jackie and Janie and he lived for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Even though dad is now gone from this world, I can still sense and hear him inside of me as I carry on with my life.

I think dad is still looking for something to do in the spirit world. He was never one to stand still for too long. He is young, strong, vibrant and full of energy again. He has found a canoe, collected his things and he has plans to explore the rivers and lakes that have always been part of his life. On his way, he will find his mother Janie and his father James along a great river where there are plenty of fish, rabbits and geese. They will never be hungry again. His brothers Gabriel, Thomas and David are there. As he travels the land, he will eventually meet all his other relations and friends he knew and loved from so long ago.

As he sits by the fire, the crackling flames, fresh-cut wood and smell of the sap settle his spirit and makes him feel content. He does not have to work so hard anymore. There is time. There is space. He is surrounded by the scent of the pine, the willow and the grasses by the river. He can taste the cool tea-coloured water in his cup. His son Philip and grandson Nicholas are calling him by the shore. There is still some work to be done. He now has time to teach them how to hunt, trap and fish the land.

CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAYS

Happy Belated Birthday to my son, Brandon Joseph Lee Blueboy who celebrated his 12th birthday on March 28. Love, Mom OXOX

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Human Rights education and information activities for community organisations The Education and Cooperation Division of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse is offering your community association free of charge a variety of human rights workshops and resources. The main goal of the workshops is to promote a culture of human rights throughout Quebec society. We will be dealing with key human rights values, as well as their accompanying responsibilities. To obtain more information, we invite you to read the enclosed leaflet or to consult our website at:
<http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca>. Click on English, and go to Training, and then Community groups. If you are interested in any of the workshops, please do not hesitate to contact us to plan a workshop at a time convenient for you.

Available now in your Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Online Community. In videos and Q&As, on location at the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Conference Women Leaders workshop and online across Canada... Sheila Isaac, Anne Noonan, Julie Pelletier, Nicole Robertson and Tracy Scarlett share insights with women from across Canada on leveraging leadership, overcoming obstacles and succeeding in business. This unique video series illustrates how to do it! It's real, it's useful and it's FREE.
www.ideaconnector.net/womens-sharing-circle

Meetings in Mistissini: Alcoholics Anonymous, Tuesday's Hope Meeting, are at 7PM at the Mamou-Wechidodow Building Amisk Street. **Alanon Meetings** are on Tuesdays as well at 7PM at the Mamou-Wechidodow Building Amisk Street. **Alateen Meetings** are on Mondays at 3:30PM at the Reception Centre 282 Main Street. These meetings are all open meetings.

TD Scholarships for Community Leadership - Apply today! Applications available at Your high school or CEGEP (in Quebec) Online at www.td.com/scholarship or Call 1-800-308-8306 TTY (Text telephone) 1-800-361-1180

Cultural Manual for Foster and Adoptive parents of Aboriginal Children, launched at the last Gathering of the NETWORK on October 3... CHECK IT OUT!
www.reseaumtlnetwork.com/eng/Portals/5/Cultural%20Manual.pdf

The Aviva Community Fund is Canada's longest running online community competition. With over \$2.5 million dollars given away to date, the Aviva Community Fund is making a difference in communities across the country. Submit your idea for positive change and have a chance at sharing in this year's \$1 million Aviva Community Fund.

For more info go to <http://www.avivacomunityfund.org/>

Kid's Help Phone Line:

1-800-668-6868

(www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth Helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

Parents' Helpline: 1-800-361-5085

(www.parenthelpline.ca)

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared.

514-843-4333

(www.enfant-retourquebec.ca)

Drug Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626
(www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence:

1-800-363-9010

(www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality Resources Center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688 (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec:

1-866-277-3553

(www.suicide-quebec.net)

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at:
www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources

Concordia University, Montreal:

The Centre for Native Education has changed its name to the Aboriginal Student Resource Centre (ASRC). The new name is inclusive of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis students the centre serves and recognizes its role as a resource for the Concordia community. For any further details contact: aboriginalcentre@concordia.ca or 514-848-2424 ext. 7327.

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Good oral health is important for miyupimaatisiiun!

Brush your teeth **2** minutes **2** times a day



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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay**

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